

# HORIZONS OF FRIENDSHIP

# Horizons

## NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2017

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS TO END POVERTY IN CENTRAL AMERICA AND MEXICO

## An encounter as equals: Canada to Guatemala Knowledge Exchange



Joanne Gillies (centre) a Victoria-based Registered Midwife and other Canadians follow a comadrona as she visits pregnant Indigenous women.

Valenzuela Cos Matul stood up. A young, Indigenous Maya K'iche' woman from the province of Totonicapán, Guatemala, Valenzuela smiled at a team of 10 Canadian maternal health practitioners across the room. These Canadians, visiting Guatemala for 10 days to exchange knowledge and experiences on maternal and child health, listened to Valenzuela's story.

Valenzuela gave birth to her first child when she was 16 years old. As a single parent, Valenzuela had to rely on the support of her mother to get by. Valenzuela fondly remembered the care that her mother, a traditional Indigenous midwife or "comadrona", provided to her baby and her community. "This care," said Valenzuela, "and knowing that my mother lost 10 of her 14 children, made me want to become a comadrona."

Valenzuela received multiple culturally-relevant training sessions from Horizons' partner PIES de Occidente (Association for Health Promotion, Research and Education). Now, under Horizons' and PIES' four-year, \$13.2 million Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (MNCH) project, which

receives funding in part by Global Affairs Canada (Horizons must raise 15% of that total value), Valenzuela is one of 42 comadronas who have been recruited to receive intensive training and will each train 25 of their peers in maternal, newborn and child health best practices.

Opportunities for Canadian maternal health practitioners to listen to stories such as Valenzuela's were at the heart of this knowledge-exchange. Six midwives, three nurses and one family doctor, coming from cities and towns in Ontario and British Columbia, engaged with their Guatemalan counterparts as equals.

The team of Canadians trekked down steep ravines and crossed dirt paths alongside comadronas to reach homes with pregnant Indigenous Maya K'iche' women, observing the care provided. Given the remoteness of these communities, comadronas who daily navigate through these conditions are essential for providing care to women

and children in rural, predominantly Indigenous areas.

Canadians also accompanied PIES health educators on health home visits to rural communities. The Canadians witnessed how these health educators, who have already carried out more than 1,900 home visits in addition to women's discussion groups with over 5,200 total participants in the first nine months of the project, discussed maternal and child health best practices in the Maya K'iche language.

Totonicapán's health centres were also visited by the Canadian team. The Canadians were exposed to the devastatingly low availability of medical supplies: blood, oxygen, vaccines and even electrical power. Yet they all praised the resilience of the health centres' staff, who work to save lives under this situation. The project is helping remedy these gaps, fully stocking dozens of health centres and posts in Totonicapán with essential medicine and equipment.

Joanne Gillies, a registered midwife from Victoria, British Columbia said "I can honestly say that Horizons' MNCH project is the most impressive development initiative I have encountered to date." Four more knowledge exchanges from Canada to Guatemala, along with reciprocal exchanges from Guatemala to Canada where Guatemalan health providers will engage with the Canadian public, will take place as part of the project.



Global Affairs Canada / Affaires mondiales Canada



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Lily Mackenzie, Jaslyne Golaz and Ashley Aird are traveling to Nicaragua to learn about food security.

Students from Cobourg Collegiate Institute (CCI) are preparing for an adventure! This summer a youth delegation from the school will travel with Horizons to Nicaragua. Their goal: to share their experiences with young people in Nandaime and learn about community projects aimed at increasing food security. These projects are being facilitated

by Horizon’s partner CCOAR (Oscar Arnulfo Romero Community Centre).

The youth delegates are part of a project known as the CCI Food Collective, which is working to raise knowledge and find solutions around food security issues globally. In addition to holding food drives locally, the Collective supports CCOAR’s youth-led environmental projects.

It also organizes an annual Arts Nights fundraiser for CCOAR. The event gives other students at the school an opportunity to make a difference, while at the same time educating the broader Northumberland community about issues facing youth and their families in Nicaragua.

Youth exchanges provide opportunities for young people in Canada to connect at the cultural level with other communities, including the chance to directly meet, learn from, and share opinions with project partners. Student Ashley Aird, whose grandfather was born in Nicaragua, looks forward to “connecting with the culture and the communities and really having an opportunity to interact with people.”

The youth delegates can’t wait to immerse themselves in this new experience and spend time at the community centre with their peers from Nandaime.

“I think it’s important to broaden your horizons and understand what your place is on a broader level – not just who you are in Cobourg,” says Jaslyne. For Lily, the work with the CCI Food Collective has shaped her life plans. “I now want to work with food as a career. I would love to be a community dietician that works with food security.”

We’ll talk to the girls about their Nicaragua experience in the next issue of the newsletter!

## Youth Take Green Action



Kids get hands-on learning in teaching garden.

Youth in Nandaime, Nicaragua are taking an active role in making their communities a better place to live!

“Green Action” teams of 60 youth are helping Horizon’s partner CCOAR establish teaching gardens in three urban and rural schools, which will provide hands-on learning while contributing to increased nutrition for more than 1,700 students.

Through workshops and agricultural camps, youth will build their knowledge and capacity around health, nutrition, agriculture and the environment.

With the continuing drought in Central America, crop shortages and rising food prices are throwing many families into crisis, and showing just how vulnerable the country is to climate change and to natural disaster. Nearly 50% of the people in Nandaime are under the age of 18, making children and youth vitally important to the process of development.

In addition to having access to secure and healthy food, students will gain skills in small-scale urban agriculture they can share with their families.



# People Helping People

## VOLUNTEERS

Volunteerism has always been a pivotal part of Horizons. In 1973, three friends from Cobourg, Ontario spent time volunteering in Honduras, bearing witness to how the “others” live. They returned with the desire to do something meaningful to help and Horizons of Friendship was born.

Since that time, Horizons has benefited enormously from the contribution of volunteers to help us empower people and strengthen communities in Central America and Mexico.

Board members volunteer their time and talent, and many dedicated people organize annual events such as Writers and Friends in Port Hope and Kingston. Our Thrift Shop, a source of revenue for Horizons’ charitable programs, also offers an essential community service. It provides volunteer opportunities that allow seniors to stay active and well, newcomers to connect and learn English, young people to build their skills,

and individuals with physical and mental challenges to engage with their community.

The projects we support in the South are also backed by hundreds of dedicated volunteers. People like Flor Eugenia, an early childhood teacher in Panama, who has worked her entire life as a volunteer providing education and support to families from some of the most impoverished regions of Panama City. And Francisco, a lawyer in Costa Rica, who provides pro-bono legal counselling and support to migrants in his country. And Chonita, a Mayan spiritual guide in Quetzaltenango, Guatemala for 40 years, who must often walk long hours to provide guidance to community members in need.

At the end of the day, volunteering is about human connections - people helping people to make dreams come true. The dreams of people in Central America and Mexico are simple: having a place to live, a



Ross Robertson and Feren Valles recently received the Ontario Volunteer Award for their service to Horizons of Friendship.

place to call “my community, my village”, a place where they can walk without fear, a place where they can nurture their children. Thank you to all of the Horizons volunteers who are working hard to fulfill these dreams.

## GENDER VIOLENCE

# Women Share Strategies



Women in El Salvador take to the streets to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. The day’s rallying cry, “Ni una menos (Not one less),” calls for an end to femicides.

The international exchange on women and workplace violence in Mexico City began with this quote from the *Guardian*: “Violence against women is not all bloody lips and black eyes. It is emotional abuse and financial control, street harassment and reproductive coercion. At its root, such violence is about power, sex, how we view masculinity and the very fabric of our identities.”

As the words suggest, the gathering was unique in that it tackled gender-based violence in its broader context, reflecting the realities of female lives in Central American and Mexico. The region has the notorious distinction of being the most dangerous non-war zone in which to be a woman or girl. Indeed, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico regularly occupy top rankings when it comes to femicides – the violent and deliberate killing of a woman. Women also face violence and harassment on the job.

Held just prior to the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (November 25), the exchange brought together representatives from several Latin American women’s rights organizations working to end gender-based violence and promote gender equality rights. Horizons is proud to support several of these, including the Organization of Salvadoran Women (ORMUSA), the María Elena Cuadra Working and Unemployed Women’s Movement (MEC), and the Women’s Association for Development in Sacatepéquez (AFEDES), among others.

At the gathering, our partners highlighted the long struggle against workplace violence in all its forms, from daily harassment to unlawful firings for labour organizing activities. It was an opportunity to share strategies to confront these gender-based attacks. For example, MEC and ORMUSA representatives shared their successful experience in mobilizing around the United Nation’s International Labour Organization protections specific to women in the workplace, while AFEDES highlighted its ongoing work in defense of the collective intellectual property developed largely by Indigenous Maya women.

Exchanges like these allow women on the front lines to incorporate proven tactics in their fight, and commit to supporting each other in future.



Father Tim

After devoting much of his life to Horizons of Friendship, it's no surprise that our co-founder Father Tim Coughlan has found a way to continue his support even beyond his lifetime. Father Tim has made a planned gift to Horizons — something he hopes you'll consider doing too.

"I took out a life insurance policy and named Horizons of Friendship as the beneficiary," he says. "All it takes is a commitment to pay the monthly premium – a premium that's very manageable. When the policy matures, it will bring Horizons a far larger gift than I could ever give during my lifetime."

For decades, people like you have shared deep passion and interest in Horizons of Friendship, providing financial support to help people in Central America and Mexico transform both their lives and the systemic social conditions that too often confine them to the margins of society.

The communities we work with continue to face many significant barriers, including

a growth in the rates of poverty, hunger and malnutrition, and maternal and infant mortality. Problems with increased migration continue to contribute to family abandonment and loss of identity while discrimination, exclusion and violence against Indigenous peoples are increasing at an alarming pace.

As a Horizons supporter, you recognize that effective responses to such challenges are neither simple nor quick, and can only arise from within affected communities. When women, men and youth share their experiences and wisdom, raise their voices and work together for change – that's when their societies begin to transform.

Many in the Horizons community have found deep fulfillment by supporting this life-changing work through their planned gifts. No one is more aware of that satisfaction than Father Tim, lifelong supporter, and tireless advocate.

"I see it as a good way to support the work Horizons will do far into the future," says Father Tim. "Many of our previous funding sources have shrunk. Economic conditions have changed, and so have the priorities of our federal government. My insurance gift will help replace some of that lost funding and help Horizons support our sisters and brothers in developing countries for generations to come."

Thank you for staying with us for the long haul. To join Father Tim in making an enduring gift, please contact Linda Robertson at 1.888.729.9928 or [lrobertson@horizons.ca](mailto:lrobertson@horizons.ca).

## Ways to Give

Planned giving is a powerful form of philanthropy – it is everlasting, thoughtful, and preserves your legacy throughout your lifetime and beyond.

The impact of a legacy gift is endless – it promotes strong family values, provides tax benefits, and ensures your loved ones and the causes meaningful to you are provided for.

There are many ways to make a planned gift, including:

- **Remembering** Horizons of Friendship in your Will
- **Donating** Stocks and other Publicly Listed Securities
- **Making a gift** through Life Insurance
- **Contributing** the proceeds of a Retirement Fund (RRSPS/RRIFs)
- **Donating** a gift of property such as real estate or art work

## Are you interested in going beyond tourist attractions?

Come to Chiapas, Mexico with Horizons February 5th - 14th, 2018



For more information: [info@horizons.ca](mailto:info@horizons.ca) or Linda Robertson at 905 372 5483 x 10



I want to help Horizons empower people in Central America and Mexico.

## Gift Payment Options

I'd like to make monthly gifts  
 \$25    \$50    \$100    \$ \_\_\_\_\_

I'd prefer to make a one-time gift  
 \$25    \$50    \$100    \$ \_\_\_\_\_

I've enclosed a void cheque to start direct withdrawal for monthly giving

I've enclosed a cheque made out to Horizons of Friendship for a one-time gift

Visa    MasterCard    AMEX

\_\_\_\_\_ account number \_\_\_\_\_ expiry

NAME ON CARD \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_

Please send me updates about Horizons' programs via email at:

\_\_\_\_\_